

REMARKS

I. General Remarks

Claims 1-3 and 11 are currently amended, as shown. With this Amendment, Applicants add new Claims 13-19, as shown. Therefore, Claims 1-19 are all the claims currently pending in the application. Claims 1-8, 10, and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Thuries, U.S. Patent No. 5,089,665 ("Thuries"), in view of Floessel et al., U.S. Patent No. 3,916,081 ("Floessel"). Claims 9 and 11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Thuries in view of Floessel and Applicants' Own Admission (AOA).

II. Claims 1-8, 10 and 12

With respect to the §103(a) rejection of claims 1-8, 10, and 12, Applicants respectfully submit that a reasonable combination, if any, of Thuries and Floessel fails to teach or suggest all of the claimed limitations.

Claims 1-3 and 12. Applicants submit that neither Thuries nor Floessel, either alone, or in combination, teaches or suggests a connection module, as required by Claim 1, connecting two adjacent longitudinal sections, wherein the connection module comprises:

metal cladding forming at least three tubular portions, each tubular section filled with dielectric gas and each tubular section having a single one of said at least three phase conductors passing through it (Claim 1, as currently amended).

Thuries discloses two sections of gas-insulated line, each comprising an outer, gas-tight sheath 201, and an inner, aluminum sheath, surrounding a conductor, connected, as shown in

Figures 8 and 9. The means of connection, as disclosed in Thuries, comprises a series of tube sections (first tube 303, second tube 302, and third tube 301) connected in series, such that the single conductor passes through each of them in turn. Thuries also discloses that the gas-tight sheath 201 could, alternately, surround a number of conductors each surrounded by an aluminum sheath, such that the conductors would, together, pass through each of the series of tube sections connecting the two sections of gas-insulated line. The aluminum sheaths disclosed in Thuries are not gas-tight. (Thuries, col. 3, lns. 8-9). Thuries fails to teach or suggest a connection module having at least three substantially parallel tubular portions, each filled with dielectric gas, and each having a single one of at least three phase conductors passing through it, so that the phase conductors are separated from each other.

Likewise, Floessel fails to teach or suggest the above-mentioned limitation recited by Claim 1. Floessel discloses a series of gas-insulated line sections joined together, as shown in Figures 2a and 2b, by an enlarged sleeve portion on the end of one section that the end of the adjoining section is fitted into. (Floessel, col. 2, lns. 55-65). Floessel, like Thuries, fails to teach or suggest a connection module having at least three substantially parallel tubular portions, each filled with dielectric gas, and each having a single one of at least three phase conductors passing through it.

Applicants respectfully submit that a reasonable combination, if any, of Thuries and Floessel fails to teach or suggest all of the limitations of Claim 1, as currently amended. Therefore Applicants submit that Claim 1 is patentable, and that Claims 2-3 and 12 are patentable at least by virtue of their dependence on Claim 1.

Claims 4-8 and 10. Applicants submit that neither Thuries nor Floessel teaches or suggests a connection module made up of “a first dish-shaped end cap and a second dish-shaped end cap,” or link tubes “surrounding an orifice in the first end cap and an orifice in the second end cap, through which orifices the same phase conductor passes,” as required by Claim 4.

With respect to the first and second dish-shaped end caps, required by Claim 4, the Examiner relies on Thuries and points to elements 302 and 303 of Figure 8. As disclosed in Thuries, element 302 is a second tube, and 303 is a first tube. (Thuries, Fig. 8 and col. 5, lns. 42-44). Neither of these tubes is dish-shaped, nor an end-cap. In fact, Thuries fails to teach or suggest first and second dish-shaped end caps. Likewise, Floessel fails to teach or suggest any dish-shaped end caps.

With respect to the link tubes, the Examiner continues to rely on Thuries and points to elements 313 and 307 of Figure 8. As disclosed in Thuries, element 313 is a fixing ring, and element 307 is a clamping bolt. (Thuries, Fig. 8 and col. 5, lns. 51-59). Neither of these elements remotely represents a tube, or specifically, a link tube surrounding an orifice in a first end cap and another orifice in a second end cap, through which orifices the same phase conductor passes, as required by Claim 4. A phase conductor could not possibly pass through either the fixing ring, or the clamping bolt, as disclosed in Thuries. Floessel discloses a number of metal tubes, attached one to the other, in series, through each of which passes a number of phase conductors. However, none of these tubes is a link tube, connecting an orifice in one end cap to an orifice in another end cap.

Applicants respectfully submit that a reasonable combination, if any, of Thuries and Floessel fails to teach or suggest all of the limitations of Claim 4. Therefore Applicants submit that Claim 4 is patentable, and that Claims 5-8 and 10 are patentable at least by virtue of their dependence on Claim 4.

Therefore, for at least the exemplary reasons presented above, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the §103(a) rejection from Claims 1-8, 10, and 12.

III. Claims 9 and 11

Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 9 and 11 are patentable at least by virtue of their dependence on Claim 4, as discussed above.

IV. New Claims 13-19

Applicants add new claims 13-19 in order more fully to cover various aspects of Applicants' invention as disclosed in the specification.

V. Conclusion

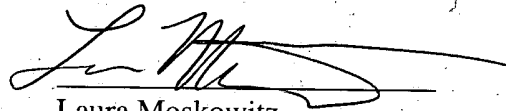
In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. §1.114(c)
U.S. APPLICATION NO. 09/970,679

Q66527

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted;



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